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ABSTRACT

As one of a series of five dialogues initiated by the Association of American Colleges, this workshop was concerned with the special mission of church-related colleges and universities. Representatives of 27 colleges met for a discussion based on five questions: (1) Has Christian higher education been compromised by the exigencies of a secular world?; (2) How does the mission of the college make a difference in the lives of its students?; (3) In what ways do the liberal arts contribute to the institutional mission?; (4) What is the importance of faculty influence on individual students, on curriculum, on religious life and perspective, and how can faculty members be encouraged to share actively in the Christian mission of the college?; and (5) What are the relationships between the college and the sponsoring denomination, and what does each expect of the other? (MSE)

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A
DIALOGUE
ON

Achieving the Mission of Church-related Institutions of Higher Learning

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ACHIEVING THE MISSION

OF

CHURCH-RELATED INSTITUTIONS

OF

LIBERAL LEARNING

hosted by

Rockhurst College

Kansas City, Missouri

November 29-30, 1976

Association of American Colleges
Washington, D. C.
1977

FOREWORD

In pursuance of the reoriented mission of the Association of American Colleges -- the National Association for Liberal Learning -- the Association initiated in the fall of 1976 a series of invitational dialogues on various aspects of liberal education.

Five such dialogues were conducted in October - December with the help of host institutions in different parts of the country. Additional dialogues, addressed to distinctive concerns of the various kinds of institutions of higher learning that make up the Association's present and potential membership, are planned for the near future.

This pamphlet summarizes the proceedings of one such dialogue, held on November 29 and 30 in Kansas City, Missouri. The dialogue, on Achieving the Mission of Church-Related Institutions of Liberal Learning, was designed to bring together representatives from colleges of different religious persuasions who might otherwise have limited opportunity to talk about their common concerns. The participants were forty-nine men and women representing twenty-seven colleges and universities of fourteen different denominations. The range of individuals and institutions is demonstrated by the roster printed at the end of this report.

The Association of American Colleges is deeply indebted to Father J. Barry McGannon and Mr. Harry Blanton for their warm hospitality and their skillful organization of the meeting. We hope and believe that this report will prove illuminating to other institutions as they grapple with the special problems of liberal education in a religious context and will encourage them to extend the dialogue so auspiciously begun. If so, it will make a valuable contribution to AAC's mission of promoting and enhancing humane and liberating learning.

Frederic W. Ness
President
Association of American Colleges

ACHIEVING THE MISSION OF CHURCH-RELATED INSTITUTIONS OF LIBERAL LEARNING

Toward the end of "Little Gidding," one of his Four Quartets, T.S. Eliot writes:

> What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning
> And the end is where we start from.

The special mission of church-related colleges and universities is where we must start from, declared Father J. Barry McGannon, Vice President of Rockhurst College. To open the session, he posed a series of questions which formed the structure of the discussion.

1. What does it mean to be a Christian college or university today? Have any of us lost our mission? Has Christian higher education been compromised by the exigencies of a secular world?
2. How does the mission of the college make a difference in the lives of its students? How do you see students getting something, some values added, some sprirtual development in their years on campus?
3. In what ways do the liberal arts contribute to the institutional mission? Can religious mission be reflected in curriculum? Has career education pre-empted Christian education?
4. What is the importance of faculty influence on individual students, on curriculum, on religious life and perspective? How can faculty members be encouraged to share actively in the Christian mission of the college?
5. What are the relationships between the college and the sponsoring denomination? What does the religious body expect of the college? What does the college expect of the religious group?

The purpose of the dialogue was to ask these questions, to think about them together, and to begin to answer them. In an atmosphere of sharing and cooperation, nearly fifty individuals from twenty-seven institutions of fourteen denominations proved that God's family is large and diverse--but also much in agreement on the role of church-related colleges and universities.

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY

The working sessions began with three case studies; Peter Armacost as President described "Ottawa University: A Liberal Arts College in the Baptist Tradition."

As a Christian college of the liberal arts, Ottawa has a distinctive mission to perform in seeking the integration of learning and faith, knowledge and commitment. To accomplish this objective, the college sets issues of personal orientation and futures, values, goal clarification, and vocation in the educational experience of each student from the outset. The Ottawa program has the following features:

1. There are no required courses in religion and philosophy.
2. A core curriculum, comprising seven courses, integrates religious and philosophical ideas, considerations and materials within its offerings. Because these courses are taught jointly by faculty from many departments, faculty as well as students have a greater awareness of the relatedness of religious and philosophic concerns to a wide range of academic interests.
3. A system of individualized educational planning places values issues at the very center of what students and faculty do together. Students are pressed to integrate their own fundamental personal choices in dialogue with the resources of the Christian tradition, past and present.

4. The system of academic advising is crucial in assisting each student to achieve his or her own greatest potential.

The emphasis on the enhancement of the personal development of each student points out the important role of the faculty. In hiring faculty members, Ottawa looks for persons who have demonstrable excellence in their academic disciplines as well as excellence (or the potential for excellence) in teaching undergraduates. As teachers in a Christian college, Ottawa faculty members should be persons with commitment evident in their personal life styles, persons with a relational habit of mind, and persons with sensitivity to the development of persons and values. In short, they must be persons who demonstrate a passion for holistic relating of what is known to what is good, as well as a sensitivity to assisting students in the process of focusing on meaningful goals. Faculty members need to be models of the integration of learning and faith, knowledge and commitment.

Ottawa's religious life program, complementing the curriculum and the teaching-advising relationship, confronts each student with the claims of the Christian faith. Centered on small groups, the program provides opportunities for in-depth Bible study, Christian service, creative worship, and the sharing of one's faith.

The college has clear statements of institutional stardards of behavior and expectations which provide guidelines for value development and personal decisions by students. The basic posture regarding student life rests on the premise that it is neither possible nor desirable to provide a sheltered environment for students. College standards provide guidance to students as they develop a value system and apply it to the personal choices they face daily.

Ottawa University maintains a close but informal relationship with the

Kansas Baptist Convention and the Board of Educational Ministries of the American Baptist Churches in the USA.

ROCKHURST COLLEGE

Father A. James Blumeyer, Academic Dean of Rockhurst College, spoke on "Does the Mission of a School Really Make a Difference, or, What is Catholic about Rockhurst?"

Jesuit schools face a bold and challenging future if they will be true to their particularly Jesuit heritage. They must go beyond the criterion of academic excellence, important as it is, to the far more challenging task of bringing about in their students a radical conversion from selfish concerns to the complete generosity of God and His Kingdom. In addition, Jesuit schools must move more rigorously toward participation in community affairs, evaluating their efforts more honestly according to the criteria of both the Christian reform of social structures and the renewal of the church.

The number of Jesuits at Rockhurst has declined over the years, from a significant percentage of the faculty in the past to approximately one-third of the full time faculty at the present time. These men are committed to Catholic values in their teaching, advising, informal contact with students, retreat work, and participation in liturgical programs.

In addition, the majority of the lay faculty are Catholic. The question of the percentage of Jesuits is not an overriding issue if faculty members are men and women whose lives are inspired by the Ignation vision. It is more a question of the quality of the lives of all the faculty, both Jesuit and lay. The school will be Jesuit if the lives of its teachers exemplify and communicate to the students the specific values of the Catholic college.

For this reason, recruitment and selection of faculty will be the most important elements in the future in retaining the distinctively Christian orientation which Rockhurst possesses.

At the same time, the number of Catholic students is also significant. If a majority of students are not sympathetic to the values which the college espouses, the character of the institution is weakened. The composition of the student body is a particular concern in light of the growing competition for students and the development of an evening division for part-time students in addition to the full-time day program.

The curriculum at Rockhurst includes a required liberal education core for all students. While curriculum content does not make students Christian, it can teach them a great deal about the Christian culture in which their faith has evolved.

College leaders strive to create conditions at Rockhurst which encourage faculty, administrators, and students to intermingle and to share with one another their beliefs and concerns about the distinctively Catholic mission of the institution.

ST. OLAF COLLEGE

Professor David Wee described St. Olaf as a Lutheran college originally established to serve Norwegian-Americans. Coeducational since its founding, St. Olaf desires, in the words of a dedicatory address, that the students, "endowed with the knowledge and power of God's word, will honor God and further the temporal and eternal welfare of their fellow men."

St. Olaf was not founded, as were some church-related colleges, to prepare young men for the ministry; it was founded to prepare young men and women for the vocation of life and for life's vocations, most of which are secular. For this reason, the college has never found the liberal arts to

be inconsistent with specific career preparation. St. Olaf does find a difference between the liberal arts, which prepare people for vocations, and technical training, which prepares people in vocations. The college embraces Luther's concept of vocation or calling, in which Christian service means any work done in faith and in an effort to realize one's own humanity and to meet the needs of others. In this sense, liberal arts education at St. Olaf is vocational education--it prepares one for the calling of Christian servanthood in the world.

Professor Wee made some personal observations about St. Olaf:

1. We worship together daily, students and faculty--not all of us, but enough of us to illustrate the centrality of God's word in our lives.
2. We continue to require religious studies--we have not decreased the requirement.
3. We spend time with our students teaching and counseling--sometimes too much time, we think, but they have needs outside the classroom that we hate to ignore.
4. We devote significant monies to student support services--to help them overcome academic difficulties, social adjustments, and personal crises.
5. We regularly sponsor speakers, symposia, and special events that force us to confront difficult problems within the context of Christian truth.
6. Most importantly of all, we hire people who are committed to these matters. All the programs and money in the world cannot help us achieve our stated ideals unless most of our faculty and administration embrace them out of conviction.

> When we hire, we try to hire the most capable chemists, artists, or deans we can find; but we hire only those who convince us that they believe in our distinctness as a college of the Church, and who persuade us that they cherish our ideals even if they don't share our religious and ethnic heritage.

St. Olaf has a legal relationship with the American Lutheran Church, receiving about two percent of its annual budget as well as a specific constituency from this synod. The Lutheran position on colleges of the Church states:

> The Church College is one of the frontiers of the mission of the Church. Committed to Jesus Christ, this community of faith and learning produces the quality leadership which a secular and traumatic society so desperately needs for renewal or even survival. The Church and the Church College belong together because they confess the same faith and share the same mission.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT

The discussion which followed these case study presentations was not regidly controlled by the five sets of questions which formed the agenda for the conference. In many ways the importance of the session for the people who attended is contained in one definition of dialogue--"talking together." Participants had much to share and much to learn about the translation of Christian ideals into practice within different denominational and institutional settings. At the same time they agreed on several crucial factors which help a church-related college achieve its mission.

Centrality of Faculty

Faculty members are the glue that holds any institution of higher education together. At a church-related college, however, the faculty plays a special role in fostering student development spiritually as

well as intellectually. This extra dimension of faculty responsibility requires special techniques of recruitment and hiring.

Church-related colleges and universities understandably want excellent teachers with strong preparation in their disciplines. Some participants experienced difficulties in hiring because many strong graduate programs are in state universities or in prestigious private institutions. Though the latter may have at one time been church-related, they now are predominately private or independent and in fact, are sometimes as dependent on governmental funding as are state universities. Any connection with a sponsoring denomination is tenuous, a part of the past, or simply forgotten. Students from such institutions have never been exposed to what it means to be part of a Christian learning community; they have no real base of Christian understanding.

Members of the group suggested several techniques for determining a candidate's potential for becoming a committed faculty member. More and more colleges are going beyond a cursory glance from the dean or department chairman to an intensive, three day interview process. While the interviewer cannot expect a well-developed philosophy of education from graduate students, he or she can look for other desired personality traits--honesty, openness, humility, ability to deal with complex questions, an indication of personal faith.

Interaction Among Faculty and Students

Faculty members exert a positive influence, not only in content of an academic course, but also through the advising system and the presentation of examples in their personal and professional lives. Retreats for faculty and students give both groups an opportunity to grapple together with value decisions of life. On many campuses, faculty invite students into their homes and show them another, nonacademic side of their lives. The development

of a campus tone, the feeling that "we are different" in a special way is best brought about when students and faculty know one another beyond the formalities of the classroom.

Personal Development of Faculty and Students

A Christian college is committed to encouraging the personal development of all members of its community. While the style and intensity differ from denomination to denomination, from college to college, personal development programs of one type or another are essential to achieving the special mission of the church-related institution.

For students, the process should begin with admissions materials, campus visits, and explicit statements of what is expected from members of a Christian learning community. Some colleges continue the process by inviting selected incoming freshmen to the campus for leadership training during the summer. Personal development activities should be explicit about expectations of the college because students have chosen, and been chosen by, a particular institution.

Faculty development programs should be explicit about those expectations as well. The contract or letter of commitment should point out any extra dimension in the religious or value area which is expected by the college. In addition, many colleges have workshops that concentrate on those duties related to the religious orientation of the institution; advising systems that stress the value dimension; and evaluation of faculty which openly includes value development as a criterion for measuring a faculty member's progress.

Most colleges feel that faculty development, while an important goal in itself, is also the most effective means of value development in students.

Integration of Curriculum and Outcomes

Students and faculty, while coming from different backgrounds, join together for a common experience at the church-related college. The institution

hopes that this experience will result not only in academic growth but in spiritual and moral development as well. It is no easy matter to develop a curriculum that offers, in addition to a secular education, a guide to life. A further complication is the importance of the curriculum itself in influencing non-academic activities.

Once again, the role of the faculty is essential. A church-related college should strive to recruit faculty members who possess expertise in a subject area as well as an ability to heighten the religious atmosphere on campus through their teaching and other activities.

Each institution must examine its program and answer such questions as: Do requirements in religion or Bible studies make students better Christians? What about required chapel attendance? Would persuasion and encouragement be more effective? To what extent should curriculum reflecting the Christian view of the cosmos determine views in the natural sciences? Can social sciences be taught in a value-free setting? Should they be taught that way?

The most difficult question of all is: How important is the curriculum in influencing students after they leave the college?

Numbers as a Guarantee of Commitment

The case study presentations raised the issue of the percentage of students or faculty of the sponsoring denomination necessary to maintain the essential character of the institution. Some participants felt that fifty percent was the critical point at which denominational commitment was threatened. On the other hand, some felt that an institution's most Christian existence was among those not sharing its faith, as, for example, a Catholic college in an inner city area or a Lutheran college in a section of a farm state populated mostly by other denominations.

While most agreed that numbers are important, the majority of the group seemed to feel that attitude or sympathy toward the mission of the college was

more important than strict accounting of formal affiliation.

Denominational Relationship

In a time of declining student populations, church-related institutions question whether they should remain attached to a denomination which will insure their financial support and potential prospective students. This advantage could be outweighed by potential governmental aid to meet the needs of increasingly secular students.

The contributions of sponsoring denominations, in dollars or in services, often make the differences between red and black in the ledger books. Increasingly, however, these contributions are becoming less important. At the same time, a church-related college cannot afford to limit the number of students from other faiths. Where does a college lose its religious identity?

An equally hot topic for the participants was the concept of church-relatedness as an enhancement of or hinderance to academic excellence. Most prestigious private institutions in this country began as church-related institutions, yet many have decreased or abandoned their denominational ties. Some people have advanced these examples as evidence that religious ties must be sundered for an institution to become a great college or university. At the same time, other individuals gave examples of colleges that abandoned their religious orientation, became colorless colleges indistinguishable from dozens of others, and declined precipitously in enrollment. They had lost their reason for existence.

The goal for the church-related college is diversity while maintaining its distinctive character determined in part by its ties to the sponsoring denomination.

The Future of Church-related Institutions

While many concerns exist for church-related colleges, most participants found more to look forward to with anticipation. While many young faculty

members do not have all the desired attributes when they are hired, they are sympathetic to the goals of the college in the broadest sense of liberal education. While students may not evidence spiritual growth in their years on campus, they may develop in the years hence. If students, faculty and administrators are not comfortable with one another, they are still living in a community with many individuals whose lives reflect Christ's presence.

Even government regulations and guidelines can be seen in a positive light. At times they are onerous and burdensome, even inappropriate; yet the government is showing increasing concern for private and church-related colleges. The government wants to help, even if it is misguided at times in its methods.

The participants at the dialogue were convinced that church-related colleges and universities best serve themselves and their constituencies when they proclaim their religious affiliation openly and proudly. Institutions need not apologize for required courses in theology or specific standards in student life. Higher education institutions at all levels recognize increasingly the need for student-oriented and value-centered education. Church-related colleges have a special ability to provide such an education.

The dialogue by no means solved the problem or even answered all the questions relating to achieving the mission of church-related institutions of liberal learning. In many ways the value of the session was in coming together and reaffirming the special role of Christian colleges in American higher education. Such institutions must stick their necks out, must dare to be different, must be intentional and unapologetic about their identity and mission.

The special mission of church-related colleges and universities is where they must begin. This report, too, returns to the words of T.S. Eliot:

> What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning
> And the end is where we start from.

Participants in the Dialogue

AVILA COLLEGE
- Sr. Olive Louise Dallavis
  President

BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE
- Dr. Raymond M. Branstad
  President
- Dr. Paul A. Helland
  Dean

BRIAR CLIFF COLLEGE
- Dr. Kasper C. Marking
  President

CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY
- Rev. Michael Sheridan, S.J.
  Academic Vice President
- Dr. Richard Passon
  Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

DR. MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE
- Mr. Arthur J. Schulz
  Vice President for Academic Affairs

DONNELLY COLLEGE
- Sr. Virginia Minton
  Academic Dean

EVANGEL COLLEGE
- Dr. Robert H. Spence
  President
- Dr. Zenas J. Bicket
  Academic Dean
- Dr. Hardy W. Steinberg
  Member, Board of Directors

GRACELAND COLLEGE
- Dr. Gerald L. Knutson
  President
- Dr. Paul M. Edwards

GRAND VIEW COLLEGE
- Mr. Karl F. Langrock
  President
- Dr. Thomas R. Fischer
  Vice President

KANSAS WESLEYAN
- Mr. Duane L. Dyer
  Vice President for
  Institutional Advancement
- Rev. Sam Leonard
  Chaplain

MARYMOUNT COLLEGE
- Sr. Mary Buser
  President
- Sr. Jean Sweat
  Academic Dean

MORNINGSIDE COLLEGE
- Dr. Thomas S. Thompson
  President

McPHERSON COLLEGE
- Dr. Paul W. Hoffman
  President
- Dr. Merlin L. Frantz
  Vice President

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE
- Dr. Edward E. Ericson, Jr.
  Academic Dean

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY
- Dr. Peter H. Armacost
  President
- Mr. Harold D. Germer
  Dean of the College

PARK COLLEGE
- Dr. Harold L. Condit
  President
- Dr. William C. Pivonka
  Dean
- Dr. Barbara Higdon
  Dean of Continuing Education

REGIS COLLEGE
- Rev. Michael J. Sheeran, S.J.
  Assistant Dean

ST. OLAF COLLEGE
Dr. Sidney A. Rand
President
Dr. David Wee

COLLEGE OF ST. SCHOLASTICA
Dr. Bruce W. Stender
President
Sr. Mary Odile Cahoon
Vice President/Academic Dean

COLLEGE OF ST. TERESA
Sr. Agnes Malone
Trustee
Sr. Jeremy Dougherty
Vice President for Academics

SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE
Dr. Donald B. Ruthenberg
President
Dr. J. Hamby Barton
Dean

TARKIO COLLEGE
Dr. Lawrence L. Pattee
Dean

UNION COLLEGE
Dr. Myrl O. Manley
President
Dr. Dean L. Hubbard
Academic Dean

WESTMAR COLLEGE
Dr. John F. Courter
Dean of the College
Dr. Dwight Vogel

WILLIAM JEWELL COLLEGE
Dr. Bruce R. Thomson
Vice President

COLLEGE OF ST. MARY
Sr. Mary Angelica, R.S.M.
President
Sr. Mary Mechtilde, R.S.M.

ROCKHURST COLLEGE
Fr. Maurice Van Ackeren, S.J.
President
Fr. J. Barry McGannon, S.J.
Vice President
Fr. James Blumeyer, S.J.
Academic Dean
Dr. Harry Blanton
AIDP Coordinator